

YELLOWSTONE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT COUNCIL

CONSERVATION DISTRICT MEMBERS: Carbon, Custer, Dawson, Park, Prairie, Richland, Rosebud, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Yellowstone, McKenzie County North Dakota, RAC Chairman

Meeting Minutes -- June 19, 2008

Fort Keogh Meeting Room

Members Present: Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass CD; Tony Barone, Richland CD; Don Youngbauer, Rosebud CD and MACD; Phil Fox, Treasure CD; Bob Hector, Yellowstone CD; Walter Rolf, Custer CD; John Moorhouse, RAC Chairman and Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie ND, CD.

Others Present: Warren Kellogg, TAC; Laurie Zeller, DNRC; Jim Robinson, DNRC/TAC; Burt Williams, TAC/TNC; Ken Sanborn, Northern Great Plains Joint Venture; Susan Gilbertz, MSU-Billings/TAC; Karin Boyd, AGI/TAC; Barry Albert, NRCS; Nicole McClain, YRCDC Coordinator; Laverne Ivie, Yellowstone CD; Liz Ching, Senator Baucus's office; Mary Elizabeth Irion, private citizen; Gay Easton, YCD, and Carol Watts, Custer CD.

Chairman Don Youngbauer called the meeting to order at 10:00 am on Thursday, June 19, 2008. Introductions were made.

TAC update: Warren Kellogg announced that he was officially retired from NRCS but would be working half time with DNRC through Liberty Conservation District as a watershed specialist. He will continue working with the Council as the Technical Advisory Committee Chairman.

Warren yielded the floor to Susan Gilbertz, MSU Professor and TAC member. She followed up on the Yellowstone River Cultural Inventory archival project with a budget of approximately \$15,000 to professionally archive the records at the Western Heritage Center. It was suggested that the Council support this project by applying for funding through the DNRC HB223 grant program. Laurie Zeller said money would be available in July, and Kelly Norwood could get the information. Paul Gilbert made a motion giving permission to search for a grant and to go forward with the process. John Moorhouse commented that it was the intent of the Council that the study would be preserved. John seconded the motion and it carried by voice vote.

Warren continued the TAC update thanking Don and Walter for attending the meeting. The 310 data entry was discussed and Warren proposed getting a group of districts together to view the program and find out how many would be interested in participating. There is money in the RGP05 grant to help pay costs. It is possible a part time person may need to be hired.

Jim Robinson had Channel Migration Zone maps for the counties along the Yellowstone River. He questioned how we were going to get this information to the public. Do we provide GIS data? Should it be published through NRIS? Jim will work with the Resource Advisory Committee and bring their findings to a future meeting. John Moorhouse made a motion to post the CMZ report to the NRIS site. Walter Rolf seconded and the motion carried by voice vote. Jim reported that the LiDAR is almost complete.

Additional money has recently become available through the ACOE (\$70K from fisheries deferred for 1 year), the current RDGP grant (\$39K), and the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture (\$10K). It was suggested that \$43K (ACOE) be used to fund the complete wetlands scope, \$10K for hydraulics (ACOE), \$17K (ACOE) to expand and complete the human impacts timeline project. Additionally, it was suggested that \$16K (RDG) go toward completing the fisheries habitat mapping, \$8K for riparian fieldwork (NGPJV) and \$2K for wetlands (NGPJV). It was suggested that the remaining funds be distributed among riparian field work, public outreach and the 310-Google Database. Bob Hector made a motion to have Warren Kellogg distribute the available funds as outlined, Paul Gilbert seconded, and there was no further discussion, all were in favor and the motion carried.

Warren announced upcoming TAC meeting in Livingston. On July 30 there will be a meeting to start developing the framework for the Cumulative Effects Assessment and on July 31 is the regular TAC meeting.

Burt Williams, TNC/TAC member, addressed the Council and asserted that the Cumulative Effect Assessment is where science meets politics. He thought it would probably be a 3 year process in which we could make really good or bad decisions. Burt pointed out this is the piece that we will be judged on in terms of success of the Cumulative Effects Study.

Ken Sambor, Northern Great Plains Joint Venture, briefly addressed the Council. He stated that he was learning a lot from attending Council and TAC meetings. He also stated that the JV is growing and struggling to find their niche and when they see

successful partnerships like the YRCDC they ask what they can do to help. Recently, the NGPJV contributed \$10,000 for the wetlands study (\$2K) and riparian fieldwork (\$8K).

Business meeting: Carol Watts handed out the financial reports. The first one was a printout of the transactions in the account since the last meeting. The second was the grant statement which shows the balances in the grants. Carol discussed how each grant was being used. There were no questions and the reports were accepted for audit. Tony Barone made a motion to accept the financial reports, Orvin Finsaas seconded and the motion carried by voice vote. Carol asked that vouchers from this meeting be turned in quickly as the year would be ending June 30, 2008.

The minutes for the April 17, 2008 meeting were approved. Paul Gilbert made the motion to accept the minutes with two minor corrections, Tony Barone seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

Elections: There was a nomination by Walter Rolf to retain the current leadership, and it was seconded by Tony Barone. During further discussion Don Youngbauer, Chairman, conveyed the importance of making sure that everyone who was interested in serving in a leadership role had the opportunity to do so. Bob Hector stated that the Yellowstone Conservation District may appoint another representative at which point his term would end. Walter withdrew his motion and John Moorhouse made a motion to nominate Don Youngbauer as Chairman and Bob Hector as Vice-Chairman. Paul Gilbert seconded, there was a request for additional nominations (3 times), and without further discussion the motion carried by voice vote.

Updates: Paul Gilbert: Paul reported on the Montana Conservation & Restoration Partnership meeting that he attended on June 3rd with Guelda Halverson, Sweet Grass CD Administrator. The meeting was held in Bozeman. This group has not been fully formed, and they are working on their vision, purpose, and funding issues. Paul had handouts with information. Nicole suggested that the Council invite them to one of our future meetings.

Chairman's report: Don reported on the MACD Spring Board meeting in Helena on June 2 and the meeting with Montana Rail Link on May 31 in Missoula. He stated that the meeting with MRL was successful, and he looked forward to helping facilitate future opportunities for the Council and MRL to work together.

Vice-Chairman's Report: Bob Hector reported on the river clean-up project. He explained that after last year's extensive river clean-up project, it was put back onto the CDs to conduct their own projects. He requested to have this on the next meeting agenda to discuss in greater detail. He also urged the Council to keep their agenda in front of other groups and agencies, such as the Bridger Plant Materials Center.

Coordinator's report: Nicole reported that she submitted an application to DNRC Reclamation and Development Grant Program for the Yellowstone River Riparian Restoration Project by the deadline on May 15, 2008. She also reported that the MLIA grant application for YR Wetlands project was fully funded in the amount of \$74,000. Additionally, Nicole reported that the PPL Montana application was not funded, but she spoke to Lisa Perry who strongly urged us to reapply. She also reported that work on the Yellowstone River Rail Tour continues, and the tour is confirmed for September 11 traveling from Livingston to Columbus and returning to Livingston. She suggested that the Council conduct their next meeting the day after the tour on September 12, and the TAC was considering meeting the day before the tour on September 10.

RAC Update: John Moorhouse said that the RAC was working on the rules and costs for RAC meetings but there was nothing to bring to the table at this time. The Russian olive BMP is complete and that is the format that will be used on future BMPs. The RAC is refining the salt cedar BMP. There is a question of whether or not the BLMs grazing plan can be adopted as a BMP. John asked if there was money in the COE's \$70,000.00 for outreach and education. He said a DVD could be produced for approximately 15,000.00 and sent to various agencies and groups. Laurie Zeller commented that she did not think the DVDs would get used. Additionally, John suggested that the Channel Migration Zone maps are tested through a pilot project in Yellowstone County.

Mary Elizabeth Irion, member of the public, volunteered Miles City as a place to do a test for a presentation of the CMZ. She also stated that a coalition between Forsyth, Miles City and Glendive was recently formed to address floodplain issues.

Fish Passage Tour: The group met at the fishing access site at the T&Y Canal and had lunch. There was a cake for Warren Kellogg celebrating the fact that although he was retired he will still be working with us. The cake said "Happy Trails". Roger Muggli who serves on the RAC and is the manager for the T&Y Canal spoke to the group about growing up on a farm by the Yellowstone River and rescuing fish that had gotten stranded in the fields that were watered by the T&Y Canal. He also spoke of farming those same fields as an adult and his efforts at bringing the fish passage about. Roger acknowledged the other groups and agencies that made his dream a reality. It was a very enjoyable talk and the group appreciated hearing from him. After the lunch Roger led the group to the other side of the river where they toured the passage area.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm. There will be no July meeting. The next meeting will be August 21, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator

Nicole McClain, Coordinator

Yellowstone River Technical Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes – 6/18/2008
Miles City, MT – Fort Keogh

Thanks to Carol Watts for setting up the TAC meeting in Miles City and to Walter Rolf and Don Youngbauer for attending and participating in the TAC meeting. Thanks also to Ken Sambor, Northern Great Plain Joint Venture, for his valuable input and support.

Cumulative Effects Analysis

Cumulative Effects Analysis: Burt Williams led our on-going discussion on cumulative effects. There were two similar approaches introduced by Warren and Burt. These approaches basically outline the context and relationships key to the Yellowstone River CES. After much discussion, it was decided that a small TAC committee will flesh out these approaches prior to the next TAC meeting. Those on the committee are Burt Williams, Warren Kellogg, Jim Robinson, Greg Johnson, and Karin Boyd. The first day of the two day July TAC meeting (July 30-31 in Livingston) will be wholly dedicated to the cumulative effects discussion.

Public Participation: The RAC has been working on a Public Participation SOW that would likely be a revision to the current placeholder scope in the Project Management Plan. Once the SOW is completed and approved, the TAC would support the RAC in having the Council use some of their 2005 RDG funds to complete tasks in the revised SOW before the end of the calendar year (RDG contract expires then). It was brought up that the county-based information workshops may be a good use of these funds

Hydrology, Hydraulics, and Geomorphology

Hydrology

Greg Johnson (ACOE) reported on the status of the hydrology work. Some Omaha staff have been assigned to the Mid-west flooding which has affected the progress of this work. Hydrology modeling on the lower Big Horn River is expected to be completed by the end of September.

Water Quantity

Trevor Watson, Dr. Scarnecchia student from the University of Idaho, updated the TAC on a 2 year study that has begun. His study will use USGS gage data to complete a hydrograph trend analysis on changes influenced by municipal, irrigation, private, and industrial water withdrawals. He also intends to do an inventory on how withdrawals are being measured. We've asked Trevor to keep George Jordan up-dated on the study's progress.

Paleohydrology

Bryan Swindell introduced a study proposal that he will be pursuing as a Master's student at MSU. He is calling it, "Pre-Instrumental Hydrologic History of the Yellowstone River Basin". The study will correlate dendrology (tree rings) and available USGS gage data to extend the period of flow record and annual water yields back several hundred years. The TAC fully supported the study, but will not recommend using available monies to fund the effort at this time.

Hydraulics

Floodplain boundary mapping and hydraulic modeling for Stillwater, Yellowstone, and Dawson Counties will be completed by the end of September. An additional 10K of 2008 ACOE funding will be recommended for this SOW.

Channel Migration Zone (CMZ) Maps

The CMZ maps and report have been completed by Applied Geomorphology, Inc. and DTM. Copies will be distributed to Council members at their meeting. Recommendations will be made to the Council to 1) post the CMZ maps and report on the Yellowstone River Data web site maintained by NRIS and 2) develop a public outreach strategy to deliver and discuss the CMZ maps with local CD supervisors, county officials, and landowners.

Lidar Terrain Mapping

- Dawson County to the Missouri River: completed.
- Yellowstone County line to Dawson County: completed or will be within the month.

- Sweet Grass County: Not yet completed; ACOE may need to extend the contract.
- Orthophotos: Flown last fall and currently available.

There will need to be some post-processing of the Lidar data to make the large data sets easier to use. Jim Robinson will coordinate this with the ACOE contact.

Human Impacts Timeline

The contract (42K) with DTM is approximately 50% complete. Nicole will be working on a contract extension. Karin Boyd passed out a summary memo (dated 6/17/08) displaying some of the preliminary mapping and analysis. This may be a work item that the TAC would recommend expanding into additional counties with available 2005 RDG funds (up to 17K).

Biology

Wetlands

- MLIA grant (Montana Dept of Administration) was approved for \$74,250 to complete wetland mapping on 54 USGS 1:24,000 quads along the Yellowstone River corridor. The DOA is currently working on a Statement of Work. Nicole will be working on a contract between the DOA and Custer CD, and between the Montana Natural Heritage Program. She will also be completing agreements/contracts with the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture, MT FW&P, and MT DEQ for an additional \$5,000.
- ACOE and the TAC will recommend to the Council to use \$43,750 of the ACOE's remaining FY08 monies to have the remaining 35 quads mapped. This would fully fund Task 1 of the Wetland SOW to complete current-day wetland mapping for the entire Yellowstone River corridor.

Fisheries

The TAC will recommend to the Council that 16K of the 2005 RDG funds be used to expand the fisheries habitat mapping to the entire Yellowstone River provided the low flow and bank full flow mapping prove to be well correlated.

Riparian

The Northern Great Plains Joint Venture has contributed 2K to Task 1 of the Wetlands SOW and 8K to the Riparian SOW (targeting Richland County). If there is any 2005 RDG funding left, it could be put into the Riparian SOW for additional field work this fall.

Riparian Demonstration Project

Cody Molle, Director of Operations at Fort Keogh, conducted a brief tour on Fort Keogh pasture recently used for a Russian olive demonstration site in May.

Miscellaneous

Rail Tour

- Don Youngbauer, Karin Boyd, and Nicole McClain recently traveled to Missoula to meet with Montana Rail Link officials. They reported a successful meeting and received an initial commitment from MRL to work with the YRCDC on bank stabilization BMPs and 310 permitting. Karin Boyd introduced the concept of proactive bank stabilization along the railroad R/W rather than continually dealing with 310 emergency permits or "chasing" the rock rip-rap up the river to prevent it from being flanked. Don Youngbauer will be introducing this idea to the Council. The TAC will assist in fleshing out the concept if directed by the Council to do so.
- Nicole reported that the rail tour is scheduled for September 11th encompassing a round trip between Livingston and Columbus. There is room for 60 people, not including the MRL contingent. There will be a reception that evening following the tour. The YRCDC will meet the following day on the 12th. The TAC plans to meeting in late July to identify sites to highlight along the tour route.

310 Web Application

There will be an opportunity for the CDs along the Yellowstone to enter into the 310 Google Earth web application. Each CDs will need to decide if they want to enter into this program. It will be recommended to the Council that available 2005 RDG monies be used this calendar year to customize and expand the program. We will suggest that Nicole follow-up with each CD to gage their interest.

TAC Meeting

The TAC will be meeting on July 30th and 31st in Livingston. The specific meeting location will be arranged by Nicole. Agenda items will include:

- Cumulative Effects – entire 1st day
- Park County SAMP up-date
- Identify Rail Tour Sites
- Information Management SOW
- Reach of the Month (C16 and C17)